

Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce
Ashford Economic Development Group

Minutes of an ordinary meeting of the AEDG held at Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce on 20th August 2026 at 8.30am.

PRESENT	NAME	POSITION
	Nettie Buss (AB)	Chair
	Phil Galpin (PG)	
	Katie Hodson (KH)	
	Richard Stafford (RS)	
	Natalie Ward (NW)	
	Peter Heritage (PH)	
	Aisha Button (ABB)	
	Tom Jenkins (TJ)	On behalf of Andrew Osborne
APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE RECEIVED FROM	Maria Callow (MC) Tudor Price (TP) Doug Jackson (DJ) Lucy Clark (LC) Tom Shaw-Dunn (TS-D) Tim Sheppard (TS) James McComas (JM) Jason Rainbird (JR) Dan Sherlock (DS)	

1. NOTICE AND QUORUM

The chair reported that enough notice of the meeting had been duly given and that a quorum was present. The chair declared that the meeting was open at 8.30am.

2. APPROVAL OF PRIOR MINUTES

Minutes of the board meeting held on 16th July 2026 had already been approved. The chair had been authorised to sign them as a complete record of the relevant meeting.

3. ANY MATTERS ARISING/PREVIOUS MEETING

None discussed

4. BUSINESS OF THE MEETING

The KCC budget document was discussed, and it was agreed that members would reply individually – if anybody needs the link resent, please advise as soon as possible either to AB or PG.

The general feeling was that the document was produced in a chaotic format, but the consensus was that there was no business support or growth agenda of any value, which needs to be commented on.

Town Centre Update and Government reorganisation were discussed led by **TJ** – with regards to the latter, it has now been confirmed that Ashford will become part of ‘Mid Kent’, which will encompass Folkestone & Hythe, Ashford and Swale, although there no actual timescales at this stage, collectively the area as a whole is pushing fir becoming a ‘mayoral authority’

With regards to the Ashford Town centre update, the following was noted.

- Elwick Place is looking to open in the Autumn
- Odeon – still looking for someone to take the building
- Primark will likely open in 2027

RS advised that Taylors Passage is re-opening which will be helpful, also advised that offices / office space is becoming increasingly hard to let.

TJ updated with regards to International Trains, advising that Virgin Trains will be in operation from 2030 and other interested parties are also considering going ahead – so far there has not been any confirmation that the trains will stop in Ashford.

KL meeting suggestions for topics were discussed and **AB** agreed to forward to her contact. Awaiting final confirmation for date and venue.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

TJ – The local plan has had to be re-started! It will now have more of an economic development focus. Also the ‘Kentish Wine Way’ has been launched as we as the app ‘GO Roam’.

PG encouraged everyone to complete the quarterly survey and promote its completion.

PH advised that the outlet had submitted an application to extend its beauty offering. They are looking to install a ‘Big Wheel’ in October and also that they had had a staggering response to a recent recruitment fair where the queue became unmanageable.

RS advised that EPC changes have been updated which has caused unnecessary expenditure for businesses

General discussion around the cost of NI which is proving to be costing jobs when it comes to growing teams.

ABB advised about changes that are coming with regards to energy meters for commercial.

6. CLOSE

AB thanked AEDG members for their continued support.

Date of next meeting – To be confirmed.

There was no further business and therefore the chair declared that the meeting was closed at 10am.

.....Chair – Nettie Buss - Date